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Senior Executive Intelligence Brief

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Indonesia:
Analytic Perspective

Poor Security Delaying Aid Deliveries to East Timor

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees is prepared to enter East Timor quickly with relief supplies, but not until security conditions improve. Prointegration militias have forced nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and all but a skeleton group of UNAMET to evacuate, and militias continue to threaten UN and relief personnel.

— Even if the UN and other relief workers this week gain access to some 100,000 people affected in Dili, Indonesian military or the militias may try to deny or limit foreign access to the 200,000 needy in the mountains between Dili and Suai.

Aid waiting to stabilize the humanitarian condition in East Timor includes a ship in coastal waters ready to offload 1,400 tons of rice in Dili and a UN World Food Program shipment of another 5,040 tons of rice in transit to Dili. Over the past few years, the UN and NGOs have provided food aid to children under age five and expectant and lactating women in East Timor.

Hundreds of people have been killed and as many as 300,000 have been displaced, of whom 200,000 are in immediate need of assistance, according to UNAMET and press reports. Prointegration militias, strongest in the mountainous area south and southwest of Dili, are still forcing proindependence East Timorese out of their villages, exacerbating the lean season when usual food supplies are low and people sustain themselves by eating roots, tubers, and coconuts.

— The lower level of violence on the eastern end of the island has resulted in less displacement and less destitution among its 300,000 residents.

Even if international peacekeepers deploy to East Timor, insecurity will continue to affect foreign relief operations in western Timor. Jakarta is helping meet the humanitarian food and shelter needs of many of the 100,000 displaced in western Timor and has announced plans to deliver 1,500 tons of rice. Most of the displaced from East Timor who were shipped or flown to Kupang and to other islands—some 40,000—are against independence, according to press reports and relief workers.

— Food and water are available for the 56,000 displaced in Atambua, according to US AID officials, but Red Cross workers are concerned about militia harassment of proindependence supporters in the camps.

Indonesia:
Analytic Perspective

Impact of East Timor's Volatile Ethnic Mix

East Timor's patchwork of mutually hostile ethnic groups makes it unlikely the UN presence can quickly end local conflicts. UN personnel will find a populace scarred by displacement and by heavy loss of life from attempts to gain independence that began in 1910 with a rebellion against the Portuguese.

— Known and suspected pro-Jakarta sympathizers will be the targets of revenge seekers.

Before the colonial era, East Timor was divided into many small kingdoms whose clan-based hamlets were led by hereditary rulers. Two ethnic groups predominate—the Atoni in the mountainous center of the island and West Timor—and the Belu, whose scattered subgroups share the lingua franca of Tetum.

None of the political structure that existed before the Indonesian invasion in 1975 is intact, and the Indonesian administrative structure is discredited in Timorese eyes. UN personnel may be faced with an administrative vacuum along with jockeying for power among remaining urban elites, including mixed-race families and descendants of Portuguese nationals deported to the island, who remain influential.

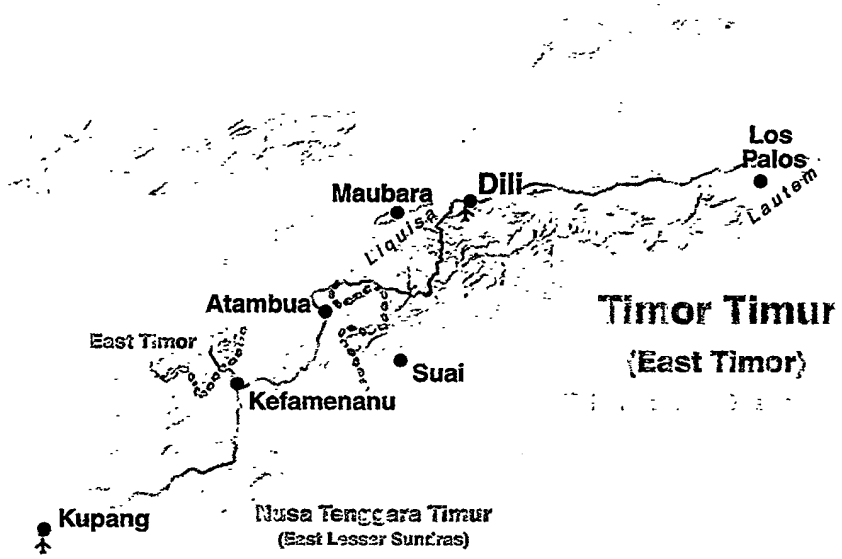
Indonesian Migrants Fuel Fire

East Timorese harbor a profound resentment of Indonesia's government-sponsored and spontaneous migration that substantially increased the island's population and changed its ethnic composition. According to academic studies, by 1996 as many as 20 percent of the population was non-Timorese.

— Ethnic clashes erupted in the past three years as Timorese accused Jakarta of deliberately using migrants to overwhelm them and take over the economy.

The number of Indonesian migrants who have fled is not known, but those who remain will continue to be a point of contention. East Timorese, including vocal overseas groups, may demand that the UN establish border controls or undertake more extreme measures such as population transfers to remove Indonesian migrants.

Indonesia: Timor's Major Ethnic Groups



Indigenous Ethnolinguistic Group	Locale	Estimated Speakers	Comments
Atoni	Western Timor, east-west border	650,000	Much dialect variation
Bunak	Central interior	50,000	One of the main languages
Fataluku	Northeast; around Los Palos	30,000	Northeastern end of Timor; around Los Palos
Galoli	North coast	50,000	One of the main languages
Kemak	North central	50,000	Closely related to Tetum
Makassi	West of Fataluku group	70,000	Several subdialects
Mambai	Mountains of central Timor	80,000	Second most widely spoken language
Tetum (includes Belu)	Central Timor corridor from northern to southern coast	300,000 to 600,000	Lingua franca of Timor except in Lautem and along border
Tukudede	North coast of Maubara and Liquisa	50,000	One of the main languages

Proindependence groups since the 1970s have pursued a Pan–East Timorese identity, called Maubere. Once a common personal name found among the Mambai, a highland ethnic group, it originated as a derogatory reference to a stereotypically illiterate hill people, who nevertheless are regarded as the guardians of traditional Timorese wisdom.

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Catholicism as Pillar and Target

The Catholic Church is a pillar in the social structure of East Timor because of its role as sanctuary and symbol of a non-Indonesian cultural identity. As a result, pro-Jakarta militias will target Church personnel and property despite a UN presence.